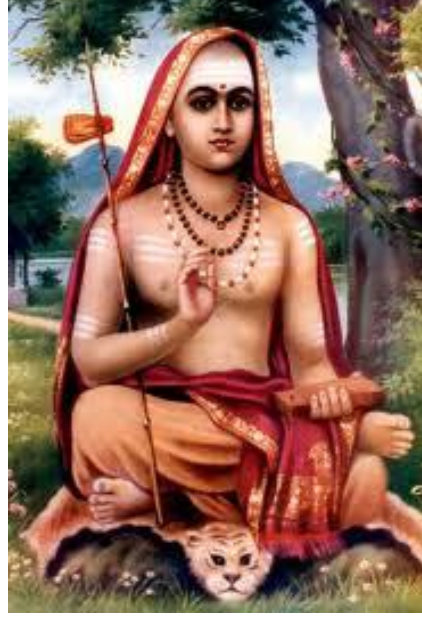


Upadesa Pancakam – Part II

by

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Having given the instructions for the *brahmacarya* and *gr̥hastāśrama*, the author dwells upon the *vānaprastāśrama* and emphasizes the *jnānamārga* and the various *sāadhanās*, starting with systematic listening and understanding or *śravaṇam*.

वाक्यार्थश्च विचार्यतां श्रुतिशिरः पक्षः समाश्रीयतां
दुस्तर्कात्सुविरम्यतां श्रुतिमतस्तर्कोऽनुसन्धीयताम् ।
ब्रह्मास्मीति विभाव्यतामहरहर्गर्वः परित्यज्यतां
देहेऽहम्मतिरुज्झ्यतां बुधजनैर्वादः परित्यज्यताम् ॥ ३ ॥

In this *śloka*, Śaṅkarācārya briefly mentions about *śravaṇam* in the first line; *mananam* in the second; and *nidhidhyāsana* in the third.

In the *upaniṣads*, the *vedāntic* concepts are not explicit. The *meemāmsā śāstra* provides the key to understand these intricate concepts. For example, in the *kaivalya upaniṣad*, it is said,

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।

खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापश्च पृथ्वी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ 1.15 ॥

i.e from *brahman* are born, all the *pañca bhūtās*, the *jñānendriyās*, *karmendriyās* and *pañca-prāṇās*.

But the *upaniṣat* strangely concludes that,

‘therefore they are not there’, in the 4th *Sloka* of section 2

न भूमिरापो न च वह्निरस्ति
न चानिलो मेऽस्ति न चाम्बरं च ॥ 2.4 ॥

Similarly, the *upaniṣat* says, *satyam, jñānam, anantam brahma* – Brahman is *anantam* – limitless, all pervading. And the *Upaniṣat* says, that *brahman* created all the worlds; all the bodies, all the minds – all pervading – and then on *brahman* entered in to them!

तत्सृष्ट्वा । तदेवानुप्रविशत् ।

All these will cause great confusion unless we take the approach of *mīmāṃsā*.

When a statement is vague or confusion, to enable correct understanding, one first takes into account, all other statements of the *upaniṣat* and try to connect them. So, the answer to the question is not to be found outside the *upaniṣat*, but within it only.

And this *mīmāṃsā* method of analysis generally talks about six factors or *lingās* –

उपक्रमादि षड्लिङ्गैः तात्पर्यं निर्णयः मीमांसा अथवा श्रवणम्

This is called *Śravaṇam* or *mīmāṃsā*. The author says,

वाक्यार्थश्च विचार्यताम् । *vākyārthaśca vicāryatām* – may you analyze the meaning of every statement especially, *mahāvākyārtha*: – and when you analyze that,

श्रुतिशिरः पक्षः समाश्रीयताम् । *śrutiśiraḥ pakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām* — may you stick to the statements of the *Upanishats* only, *Śrutiśiraḥ pakṣaḥ*. *Śrutiśiraḥ* means *Vedāntā* — may you always be on the side of *Vedāntā*.

And through *śravaṇam*, we understand that the essence of *jīvātmā* is *cit* — i.e., Consciousness is the essence of the individual and, the essence of the world is *sat* or Existence, and that the Consciousness and Existence are one and the same — which alone is called *sat-cit-ātmā* or *jīva-aīśvarya-aikyam* — the one-ness of *jīva* and *īśvarā*.

Then *mananam* is introduced in the 2nd line. *Mananam* is logically refuting all other systems which are contrary to *vedāntic* teaching. Because, any knowledge involves knowing the right and also the wrong. So, knowledge is knowledge, only if it cannot be shaken by any wrong or fallacious understanding. Therefore, *vedāntic* study involves two stages —

1. Seeing *vedāntic* teaching as correct, and
2. Seeing other teachings as defective.

For example, if we accept *advaita* as ultimate then *dvaita* has to be negated, and vice-versa.

Through *śravaṇam*, one knows the teaching of *vedānta*, and in *mananam* one analyzes all the systems which say other than *vedānta* and see whether they can be accepted or not. And this problem is more in the case of *vedānta* because,

for a beginner, it is very difficult to accept the teachings of *vedānta*. Because, *vedānta* tells something contrary to whatever idea one has been habituated to. In fact, *vedānta* makes statements regarding three fundamental things — namely, *jīva*, *jagat* and *īśvarā*.

Vedanta says that the *jīva* is infinite, is *ānandasvarūpaḥ* and is immortal! Then, it makes a statement about the world — that the world is unreal, which is even more unacceptable to a layman. And the third statement that Vedanta makes it that you are non-different from *īśvarā*, which one cannot comprehend at all — because we have heard that Lord is

sarvajñah, *sarveśvarah*, *sarva śāktimān*, whereas, I know, I am *alpajñah*, *alpaśāktimān*. Therefore, how, I can be identical with the Lord? The other systems seem to be appealing because they all say that you are just a mortal, and not *brahman* and all, and the *jīvātmās* and are distinct from *paramātmā*, which is only one. They also say the world is solidly real – *jagat satyameva*. Except *advaita*, all other *darsanas* are of this view only. They also claim that they are rational systems based on logic and reasoning – *tarka-pradhāna śāstrās*. For example, *sāṅkyā*, *yoga*, *nyāya*, *vaiśeṣika*, *jaina*, *bouddha*, – are all *tarka-pradhāna* philosophies, whereas, the *advaitins* claim to be *Sruti-pradhāna* based upon *Sruti*, the *Vedas* and have kept *tarka* as only a tool or subsidiary to *Vedānta*. And that is why, in the defining the eligible – *adhikārī* – for learning *Vedānta* – it is said that *Sradhhā* or faith in the *Sruti* is a must. Where as a rational person will never talk of faith; they say that those who hold on to faith, belief etc are weak people, without intellectual capacity and call the *advaitins* as superstitious people holding on to some scriptures. And so, what is required is a thorough analysis of those systems. And this is called *mananam* – in which every other system is clearly weighed. And the beauty is, when we study those systems, we cannot take the help of *Vedas*, because they don't give importance to *Vedas* – but to Logic. So, one has to analyze all those systems with the measuring rod of logic itself, and that is why all *advaita AcAryas* are great logicians also! Sankaracharya analyzes in his *brahmasUtra bhAṣya* – second chapter, which is dedicated exclusively, where every system is thoroughly analyzed. Having dismissed all those systems, Sankaracharya establishes that logic cannot be used in the discovery of reality, because logic has got intrinsic limitations. Thus Sankaracharya establishes the deficiencies of logic by using logic itself! And He says that *Sruti* also says the same thing, namely,

*naishA tarkeNa matirApaneyaA proktA anyenaiva sujñAnAya preshta
anIyAn hya-tarkyam aNupramAnA –*

Sruti itself has talked about the limitation of *tarka* by using the word *a-tarkya*: *AtmA*

and this logical refutation of other systems and seeing the innate deficiency of logic alone will increase our faith in *VedAnta*. Therefore this is the second job called *mananam* given in the 2nd line

दुस्तर्कात्सुविरम्यताम्। *dus-tarkAt su-viramyatAm* — May you get away from all those systems which are purely logic based. This is called *mananam*. Then one may wonder, if logic is deficient and cannot reveal the truth, then does it mean that logic should be totally given up? Sankaracharya says that logic need not be totally given up, but logic can be used for understanding the VedAntic teaching – as a tool to extract the meaning of the *sastras*. That is, not to use logic to invent a philosophy – but use it to bring out the teaching of the *sastras*. This *tarka* is called *Sruti-matas-tarka*: – subservient to, the *Vedas*.

Because for all our questions and doubts, *Vedas* do not give explicit answer, but at the same time, answers are hidden in *Vedas* for any question implicitly. So, one has to extract the answer to remove a particular doubt, and the method of bringing out the answer is through logic. That is why, *Sruti* itself says, *srotavya*:, *mantavya*:, *nidhidhyAsitavya*:

Srotavya: — *Sruti pradhAna*:

Mantavya: — *tarka* supported *Sruti*

And this should also be followed by,

अनुसन्धीयताम्। *anusandhIyatAm* – may you dwell upon. Thus answering all of one's doubts is *mananam*. The benefit of *mananam* is conviction in *VedAntic* teaching. *Sravanam* gives knowledge; *mananam* gives conviction.

There afterwards, if other people accept Vedanta or not, I don't care, I am doubly sure about what I have understood. I can say 'aham brahmasmi' without any vagueness.

The final stage of *sAdhana* is *nidhidhyAsanam*. It is a process by which

the knowledge has to be converted to mental, emotional or psychological strength. Our original disease is ignorance which is purely at the level of the intellect. But its symptoms are expressed at the level of the mind in the form of attachment, hatred, fear, anxiety, worry etc. In fact all the problems of *samsaAra* are at the emotional level only. So when we look for the solution, the solution is at the intellectual level, namely, the ignorance should go. But that is not enough – there is no use of saying *aham brahma asmi* crying! One has to ask the question whether those emotional symptoms of fear etc are rooted out. As long as they are not removed, the knowledge is as good as no knowledge. So, it is a knowledge at the emotional level as emotional strength, emotional duty, emotional refinement etc., which we call as assimilation.

And that is called *jivan mukti*: – that is why Krishna describes a *jivan mukta*: as

- *du:kheshu anud-vighnamanA*: – when provoking situations are there, one is able to remain calm – *anud-vighnam* – without getting perturbed; and
- *Sukheshu vigata-spruha*: – when things are going fine, one does not get totally lost in them
- *vIta-rAga-bhaya-krodha*: – there is no clinging to any thing; ready to give up anything at any time – *vIta-rAga*;; *vIta bhaya*;; *vIta: krodha*:

The only difference is, in the case of the food that we eat, assimilation is a natural process. But in the case of *VedAnta*, assimilation requires effort!

So it is a life long process of taking up every emotional issue and consciously knocking them off. This is called *nidhidhyasanam*, and it requires time, and constant alertness with introspection.

ब्रह्मास्मीति विभाव्यताम्। *brahmAsmi iti vibhAvyatAm* – may you repeatedly dwell upon – meditate upon – the teaching that I am *Brahman*, as the Primary illuminator and not the secondary illuminator. Not only *aham brahmAsmi* is to be brought to the mind positively – and the negative side

namely, I am the *ahamkAra*, *stUla Sareeram*, *sUkshma Sareeram* – should be removed. That means, I must be able to see my own body as one of the objects in the world! And,

देहेऽहं मतिरुज्ज्यताम्। *dehe aham mati: ujjyatAm* — I am the body-notion may be given up; i.e , cultivate ‘I am Brahman’ knowledge and reject ‘I am body notion’. And this *nidhidhyasanam* is for the rest of life, there is no time limit for that!

And here afterwards, Sankaracharya gives some general instructions regarding our day-to-day living, which are conducive to *nidhidhyasanam*, keeping a *sannyAsi* in mind.

Because in the previous slokas, the *AchaAya* has talked about *brahmacarya ASrama* and *grihastha ASrama* , and,

- *nija-grihAt tUrNam vinirgamyatAm* à He spoke about *vAnaprasthaASrama* , and
- *driDha-taram karmAsu sam-tyajyatAm* à He spoke about *sannyaAsa ASrama* also.

Sankaracharya imagines a person who has passed these stages and who is a *sanyaasi* now. So, some of the instructions may not be relevant to a *grihastha*. Perhaps, one may have to modify a bit and take the instructions. And, some of the instructions are common to both *grihastha* and *sanyaasi*.

गर्वः परित्यज्यताम्। *garva: parityajyatAm* — May you give away your arrogance that might arise out of this knowledge. *vidyA-garvam* can be very dangerous – therefore, be humble.

अहरहर्गर्वः परित्यज्यताम्। *aharaha: garva: parityajyatAm* — May you constantly remove the arrogance, and

बुधजनैर्वादः परित्यज्यताम्। *budha-janai: vAda: parityajyatAm* — May you never argue with wise people. Here we have to make a subtle distinction between

vAda: and *samvAda:*

In the Gita, at the end of each chapter, it is said, *KrishNArjuna samvAde* – that is a student asking question to the teacher for clarification – for learning. That is called *sam-vAda:* – here Sankara is not dismissing *samvAda:* but dismissing *vAda:* – argument

Generally there are several ways of distinguishing between *vAda:* and *samvAda:*. For example,

1. In an argument, one looks upon that person as equal or inferior, where as, in *samvAda*, one looks upon the teachers as superior. Thus there is a basic diff in the attitude itself which reflects in one's addressing the other, the language, tone etc.
2. Often when one enters into an argument, one has made one's conclusion on a topic, and through argument, one tries to establish one's conclusion or refute the other. Whereas in a student's approach, the student may have some opinions, or notions, but he never made a conclusion or wants to refute the teacher's conclusion or teaching, He is open-minded, and willing to accept his wrong understanding.
3. In arguments, one tries to talk more and almost, doesn't allow the other to talk at all. And if the other person talks, one doesn't listen properly, and one always interferes before the other has concluded. Whereas a student talks the minimum , just enough to put his/her idea briefly and, allows the teacher to talk more and listens with 200% attention without interference. And even after the teacher has stopped, the student waits to see whether the teacher has anything more to say.
4. In addition, in arguments, since one does not listen to the other, one has nothing to reflect upon later. Whereas, in a *samvAda* with the teacher – not only one listens, one also reflects upon the thought giving maximum respect to the teacher.
5. Even after elaborate answering, one may not be convinced; politely, one will ask again and again, if needed, and might want to think about it more and ask again. Whereas, in an argument, there will be no room

for this almost.

6. After *samvAda*, there is no disturbance or bitterness in the mind , but in argument, there is always disturbance or bitterness in the mind

Thus there is lot of difference between a student asking a question to the teacher, which is welcome and is part of learning, trying to argue with a *mahatma*. Argument is positively condemned and asking questions for clarification is encouraged. And therefore *samvAda: kriyatAm; vAda: prityajyatAm*.

(to be continued)

Source Material:

1. Paramartha Tattvam – Volume 1 – The Vedas and Our Scriptures.
2. Lectures of Swami Paramarthananda, Chennai, India.
3. Sankara the Missionary Part 1, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay.